



Just Coffee



👁 19 ✓ 2 ★ 4

Chapter 1 by Dana Busby

We met in a college literature class. He looked foreign and I was intrigued. I know I looked like I belonged exactly where I was. Maybe that was intriguing to him, but I'm not sure because I never got the chance to ask him. He actually was not foreign; he was Italian American, but also a born and bred Yooper. Almost just like me.

Sitting next to him was the highlight of my day four days a week for months. We were both dating other people. At least I think we were. I was. I never had the nerve to ask him if he was.

It was just a dumb flirtation, but through the wonders of the 21st century, we have slowly reconnected. It's been ten years. Ten years. We innocently discovered that we would be back in our college town over the same weekend in July. It's perfectly natural that we would want to meet up for coffee at Babycakes. I was seriously looking forward to an almond poppy seed muffins...and a shy smile...and a handsome, classic Italian face. Ok, so perhaps I had considered that the old flirtation might taste pretty good too.

I parked my minivan in the lot adjacent to the coffee shop and watched the late morning passerby: a woman my age with a stroller, a college kid texting. It's now or never, I thought to myself.

When I reached to storefront of Babycakes, I could see him through the front window. He was hunched over a paperback. You can still turn back, I thought to myself, he hasn't seen you yet.

Chapter 2 by Jack Daw



See more of Story Wars

Login

or

Create new account

"No, I--Leo!" I gasped. He laughed, and suddenly I was 20 again: blushing and sweating and, yes, a little hungover. Running a hand through my hair, I remembered to smile. "I didn't see you there."

He raised his eyebrows, smiling back at me. Same smile--a little creased and worn, maybe, but instantly familiar.

"Saved you a spot," he said, gesturing to the chair next to him. "Got you a coffee--you still take it black?"

Never in my life have I taken my coffee black outside of Leo's company. At some point, I blurted that I liked it dark, and I've always been too embarrassed to recant. Now as then, I took my medicine, sipping gingerly at the tar-like liquid.

Leo Cavalli. Sitting so close I could reach out and touch him, so close I could feel his eyes on my skin. In half a trance, I took the empty chair.

"Thanks." I cleared my throat, not looking at him in case I lost it altogether. "So. How's, ah, Kara?"

"Clara." He corrected. "She's good. You know. Still works for IBM."

"Still drinks like a fish?" I asked, and laughed hoarsely. I had a vague memory of Clara: pretty, in a gangly way, downing shots of god-knows-what. "Man, she was an animal in college!"

"Not anymore, no. She, ah, went to AA for that," he muttered. "Can't touch a drop these days or it's all down the tubes, y'know?"

"Oh." Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck. "That sucks. For her. I mean. That's really rough."

Unable to resist, I darted a glance at him. Leo just stared into his coffee, nodding.

God, what is wrong with me? Don't talk about his wife! His alcoholic wife!

"How 'bout you?" he said. "Did you stick with, whatsisface, Norris?"

"Norris? No. God no." I laughed, maybe a little too loud. A few people in nearby booths looked up to glare in our direction. "Guy was such a mess, I don't know what I saw in him . . . No. I met this doctor actually. Years ago. Emmet. Came this close to getting married! Couldn't do it. We had a kid together, though. Alice."

"Cute name."

"Mhm." I smiled out the window at the passing cars. "She's four now. You got kids?"

"No."

Don't do it. I said so.

See more of Story Wars

[Login](#) or [Create new account](#)

See more of Story Wars

Login

or

Create new account

when they decide they're done wearing clothes, and next thing you know you've got a pack of irate Walmart employees chasing your naked daughter down the cosmetics aisle . . ."

When he could breathe again, our eyes met. I'd forgotten how his eyes were. They drew you in like magnets. Dark, mysterious, but glowing with hints of amber in the sun. I bit my lip, remembered not to do that, and took a long draught of my black, black coffee.

"She--sounds like a handful."

"Whenever I complain to my mom, she laughs and says there's some justice in the world after all. Apparently they all called me 'Denise the Menace' when I was Alice's age."

He laughed again.

"You know," he said, fighting to keep a straight face (and losing). "I can see that. You weren't exactly tame in college, from what I remember." He leaned closer, hot breath on my neck. "I seem to remember someone climbing naked onto the roof of the Dean's House?"

"Oh god, I was hoping you'd forgotten that," I moaned. "I don't remember that!"

"I'm not surprised," he said, smiling smugly as he sat back again. "You were totally blotto."

"What was that?" I laughed. "Freshman year?"

"Damn if I know, but I think that was the first time I saw you."

"You never told me that!" I squealed, hitting him softly in the shoulder. "So, what, I was Naked Roof Girl to you?"

"At first."

He looked at me, eyes half-lidded and smiling like a sphinx. My fingers itched to tangle themselves in those black curls.

"And then?"

His smile broadened, more like the Cheshire Cat than a sphinx. Lips parted, he started to speak but shook his head instead.

"Never mind."

"You can't say that and then not tell me!" I whined. "Come on. Please?"

"No. Nope. There's no way I can say it," he said, arms crossed over his broad chest. "Not sober." I smiled.

"Do you think Murray's is still in business?"

See more of Story Wars

Login

or

Create new account

Continue the story

☐ Flag as mature ☐ receive feedback

Submit draft

Write a comment...

[About](#)

[Rooms](#)

[Feedback](#)



See more of Story Wars

Login

or

Create new account